

S E R M O N

Preached On 1 Chron. 29, 18.

And now Published, because of the Exceeding Usefulness of this Subject, unto all Christians of every Perswasion or Denomination whatsoever, in Order to their common Salvation. Wherein also is shewed what it is to *Teach for hire, and Divine for Money*; and that Objection is answered, which some do frame from hence against that maintenance and Liveli-hood which the true Gospel ministers ought to have in these dayes under that Dispensation.

By Richard Stafford

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common Salvation, it was needfull for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints Jude, 3.

And so here it is needful for me to write unto you, and Exhort you, that ye should Pray without ceasing in these, or the like words, O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel our Fathers; keep this for ever in the Imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy People, and prepare their hearts unto thee.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THese are to give Notice, That I have several other Practical Sermons or Discourses of mine own Composing lying by me in Manuscript. Which if they, who have the Plenty or Competency of this World would thus Consecrate some part of their Gain and Substance unto the Lord Micah. 4, v. 13. As to be ready to distribute, and willing to Communicate towards the outward Labour and Charge of the Printing and Publishing of them, it would be for the Glory of God, (*in making known his Truth.* Isa. 38. 19.) And for the Edification and benefit of his Church and People; and consequently it would be a good Work in such Persons who shall be helpful and any ways assistant herein for which they would be Rewarded by God in the Life that is to come.

Charge them that are Rich in this World, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life. 1 Tim. 6. v. 17, 18, 19. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain Good Works; these things are good and profitable unto men. Titus

1 Chron. 29, v. 18.

O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel
our Fathers, keep this for ever in the Imagi-
nation of the thoughts of the heart of thy peo-
ple, and prepare their Hearts unto thee.

HAVING deeply considered and weighed in my Spirit, how
our Condition stands God ward or towards God; how
it is at some times afar off and Estranged from him, and again
at other times it is indifferent well towards him; sometimes
we have a most lively and Spiritual sence of God, and we
are all for Obdience, Honour and Reverence of his Name,
again at other times we are apt to deny God above, go on
forwardly in the way of our heart, setting up for our selves,
and thou hast said in thine heart, *I am, and none else besides*
me. Isa. 47 v. 11. Being our own Men, and, *Who is*
Lord over us? As the Weather is sometimes Bright and
clear, and then again dark and cloudy: Even so it Hap-
pens successively and interchangeably as to the Influences
and Communications between God and our Souls, and as
to our sence of him, and the things of his Kingdom. There
is none so very Godly and Religious, yea his best Saints and
Servants on Earth, but hath sometimes an Eclipse and cloud
come over his inward Man, which hinders from the
Shining of the Sun of Righteousness. He hath some forsak-
ings; withdrawals, Departing and hidings of the Face
of God from him; so on the other hand, There is hardly any
so very Ungodly, Wicked or Ignorant; There is none so
Vain and frolicksome, but in some little Time or Interval
is now and then in a Serious Godly mood. The Truth of
both which Observations ye may know by conferring and
comparing your own Experiences with what I here declare
to be mine. As also from hence ye may easily Gather and
apprehend the Reason of my choosing this Text. Though I
will not so arrogantly say and pretend, *It seemed good to the*
Holy Ghost and us, yet if I have the Real fear of the Lord

in my heart, then the Promise is *Not to me only, but to every Private and Faithful Christian Him shall He Teach in the way that He shall choose.* Plal. 24, v. 12. So that I may be bold from hence to say, that I am Directed and Taught of God, as I now pray for his Assistance therein, To Treat and Handle these words unto ye at this Time and Opportunity, It being an help and Remedy as to both these failings. That is to say, as to the Godly, Righteous, and Wise, when they are for the most part in a Right Disposition and Temper of Soul towards God, but sometimes they are given to Backslidings *Hef. 4 2.* To forget and loose the Spiritual lively sence of him, *O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy wayes? and hardened our Hearts from thy fear?* Iia: 63, 17. This last ought not to be at any time but when they are Zealous and Devout towards him, then there is need to Pray and Endeavour also, *O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our Fathers, keep this for ever in the Imagination of the thoughts of the Heart of thy Peop^{le}, and prepare their hearts unto thee.* And so when the other sort have some fits of Holiness for a season they have now and then a mind and think it would be better for them, both Living and Dying, to lead a Godly Religious, Strict, Holy and Precise Life. *Like Herod who heard John Baptist Gladly, and did many things;* But these only bring forth Fruit for a very short Season, or rather they do not so much as bring forth Fruit, but they are blasted or blighted in the Blossom; for it all *Evaporates into fruitless wishes and wouldings towards God,* rather then into actual Good it self or, only some Good Thought; and Inclinations, without coming forth into Act and Performance. But if it was alwayes so in their Hearts, as it is now and then for a short space, it would at length come forth into Act and Performance. And since the beginning of a thing is in Thought and Intent of the Heart towards it; and the tendencies and beginnings should be cherished and furthered according to that *Divine Method,* for who hath despised the day of small things? And *He doth not break the bruised Reed, nor Quench the smoking Flax.* If sinners and those that are yet Unconverted, are now and then roused and stirred up by a quickning and soul searching Sermon, If they are almost periwaded to be a Christian, and they perceive within them (it may be as

they By chance drop in to hear the word Preached with Authority and Life,) an inclination to accept of Gods terms, to Arise and be Sav'd Yea whatever least good in their Mind towards the Lord God at any time doth appear forth, Either by Word or Act on, or such like, here again, as it is said, Take with you Words, and turn to the Lord, and say unto him *Hef. 14, 2,* so this very same form of sound Words, may be here fitly and appositely used, *O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our Fathers, keep this for ever in the Imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy People, and prepare their hearts unto thee.* So prepare their heart, that those Strangers and Unconverted may at length be Actually brought over unto God.

As I have acquainted ye with the Reason of my choosing this Text, so by what hath been hitherto opened and explained concerning the drift and design of our intended Discourse thereon, ye may know and perceive the usefulness of this Subject, for in the order and course of my Ministry, I would only insist upon Useful Subjects which doe come within those three Ends of Preaching, or, Propheysing, *1 Cor. 14 3,* The Apostle Paul there Writes of *speaking unto Men to Edification, and Exhortation and Comfort;* for in the sequel and connexion of this our Sermon it may appear, that if the things of God and of his Kingdom are kept for ever in the Imagination of the Thoughts of the heart of thy People, they will be Edified, yea and Exhorted, to what? Even to what is expressed in the following Verse, *To keep thy Commandments thy Testimonies and thy Statutes, and to do all these things,* *1 Chron. 29. v. 19.* Which God hath made known in his Revealed Word; and as these things are alwayes kept in the heart, and done accordingly, there will be comfort to the Man, or Woman who doth so; which comfort if it be true, and sound, and well grounded, as here it is, it is a precious Sign, Token, and fore-runner of Eternal Salvation, Happiness, and Blessedness.

These Words, *O Lord God of Abraham, &c.* Are part of David's Prayer and Thanksgiving, when Himself and the People offered willingly towards the Building of the Temple, as you may find by reading over this whole Chapter of the *1 Chron. 29.* which shewed forth a Good Mind, and a good Work towards God. It is said in the verse immediately fore-

foregoing the Text, *I know also my God that thou triest the heart, and hast Pleasure in Uprightness. As for me in the Uprightness of my heart,* (Sirs, this is most excellent Divinity, and carries along with it excellent matter of Instruction for ye) I have willingly offered all these things, and now I have seen with joy thy People, which are present here to offer willingly unto thee. This same Phrase of *Offering willingly*, is repeated over no less then five or six times in this chapter. Whereby is shewn forth that exceeding stress the Holy Ghost (which acquaints us with the Mind and Will of God) doth lay thereon, and how it is delighted therewith. Hereby also we are taught and Instructed, that whatever we do in the worship, Service, and Work of the Lord, We should be sure to doe it all *Willingly*. In the Worship of God, or Hearing his Word, or waiting on him in his Ordinances; we are to perform it willingly. This is contrary to those in *Amos*, 8, v. 5. *Who say When will the new Moon be gone, that we may sell Corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth Wheat.* And who said also, Behold, *what a weariness is it*, *Mal.* 1, v. 13. Unto whom the Worship of God is in Nature of a task, or drudgery, and they complain of the length and tediousness thereof, because themselves find no delight therein, through their own Unsanctified and Unrenewed Natures. And when they come to it, it is as it were of necessity, for they think of God as an hard Master, who hath rigorously and peremptorily imposed it, and they use it to Preserve their Souls) as they imagine) from Hell fire. This is the manner of the wordly Worshippers, and of the Multitude who go to the Church, or Congregations according to custom, or just to pacify and satisfie Natural Conscience. But there is another Mind far different from this in the true Saints and servants of the Lord. *Thy People shall be willing in the day of thy Power*, *Plal.* 116, v. 3. And so they are willing in the day of his Grace and forbearance: What they do in Order to God, either in acts of Worship or other things, They doe it not Grudgingly, or of Necessity, and as it were a forced business, but willingly and with all their heart. *My heart is towards the Governours of Israel, that offered themselves willingly among the People: Bless ye the Lord*, *Judges*, 5, v. 9. The same Rule holds of all the Duties and things pertain-

ing to God and Religion, as of Alms-giving, *Every Man shall Give as he is able, according to the Blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee.* Deut. 16. v. 17. Every Man according as he He purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not Grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful or willing Giver. 2. Cor. 9. 7. And so God loves a cheerful Worshipper. God loves a cheerful and willing Servant. *Thou shalt rejoyce before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.* Deut. 12. v. 18. Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God with joyfulness of heart, for the abundance or Sufficiency of things which he gives thee. So that not only the Chapter out of which we have taken the Text, but also the Paralel places of Scripture doe confirm the same Word, that People should offer themselves willingly to the Service of the Lord. Remember and carry away with you this Adverb, willingly. And so they should come willingly to the place of Hearing his Word. I have oftentimes thought that if I had a settled Congregation of mine own in a great and Populous City (the Lord grant and Effect this my Desire, notwithstanding there are many Adversaries) I would cause these Words to be written in Great Capital Letters at the door of the Assembly, *He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear.* Which doth also imply, that he that will not, may stay away. Because that every thing in Order to God, or pertaining to Religion, should be free and willing ; and people should perform it of their own Accord, of a Voluntary Motion of their own ; for this have I learned and found from out of the Scriptures of Truth, that with such kind of Sacrifice or Worship God is well pleased, and also he is Glorifi'd therein.

The Jews did Offer willingly towards the Building of the Temple, but now we are told under the Gospel, that the most High dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands, as saith the Prophet *Heaven is my Throne, and Earth is my Footstool,* Acts. 7. v. 47. For where ever two or three are Gathered together in his Name, God is the midst of them. and he is served acceptably, equally, and all one upon the Sea-shore, or in an open Field, or in the Room of an House as what is called Churches or Steeple-Houses, notwithstanding the contradiction of Ignorant Zealots herein ; who in this retain that relick and remainder
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of that Popish Maxim, Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion; for they doe not love that whom they Ignorantly Worship, should be declared unto them; nor what they are Ignorantly zealous for, That the Truth heereof should be laid open and Manifest unto them. For as Christ according to the Flesh, was laid in the Manger of a Stable, so his Word is often more Simply and Purely Preached in places that seem mean to the outward Eye, then in finer Buildings. Though here to pursue the like Reasoning with that of David, *I dwell in an House of Cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within Curtains.* 2. Sam. 7. v. 2. So I can in no wise approve of in my Mind (I speak here after my judgment, and also I think according to the Spirit of God) That where some of the Substantial and Rich People have dwelling Houses and Rooms of their own, altogether or Sufficiently large for the number of People, that they should save and prefer them, it may be for Entertainments, and making provision for the flesh) and in the mean while suffer the Word of the Most High God to be Preached in an Old and Rotten Barn. I profess seriously that when I have seen this, it hath been matter of secret Indignation and vexation to me; for I would have nothing done on this Earth, by the Inhabitants thereof, which should in the least favour, or make shew of Enmity against, or despising of the Great and Invisible God, whose Word is there Preached, and whose Worship is there used. I do again speak after my Judgment, I would seem better if the Members of the Respective Congregations did offer willingly to make the place just decent without Sumptuousness on the one hand, or Sordid meanness on the other.

It was a good Mind and Resolution when David said unto Araunah, *Nay, but I will surely it buy of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God, that which hath cost me nothing.* 2. Sam. 24. v. 24. And the same should be drawn forth into Example and Imitation by the other Saints and Servants of God; they should in like wise content themselves to serve God with a Religion which hath cost them nothing. I say, and I will prove it out of the Scriptures of Truth, that even day labourers, Vine-dressers, yea the poorest and meanest of the People should no wise content themselves to serve God with a Religion

gion which cost them nothing, Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with *his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* Eph. 4. 28. From hence it appears that those in the Ordinary and most mean Employments, are to dispose and Give in Alms what is more then satisfieth themselves. Even this Command extends to those who were so Poor, as they before were forced to steal to serve their own necessities. And so from the Reason of that General and Indefinite Command to all People, Thou shalt not appear Empty before the Lord thy God; and in their Offerings every one was to do according to their several Ability, They that could not goe to the Price of a Lamb, were to give a Turtle or two young Pigeons, and by what is said in the Gospel of her that cast in two mites into the Treasury, which makes a farthing, from the like and same proportion and Analogy of things, It may be surely gathered, That the Lord doth require and Expect that All, High and Low, Rich and Poor, who serve him, should Minister somewhat unto him of their Substance, and should serve him with that which costs them something, whither it be a farthing, Penny, twelve pence or more, Each Person according to his Ability. Whatever is more then the necessity and convenience of his Family, should be cast into the Offerings of God, to be distributed, or expended towards the Place where his Worship is called on, for the maintenance of his Ministers, for the relief of his Poor Saints and Servants; for Good works, as is the Publishing or Propagation of his Eternal Truth, or such like. It is Observable that though the Apostle Paul did *Preach the Gospel freely* in divers places, and he saith himself, *He robbed other Churches, taking wages of them to do you service.* 2. Cor. 11. 8. Yet he all a long speaks and pleads for the lawfulness and justifiableness to accept of, and receive the free Offerings of Christian People, for his Preaching and Ministry of the Gospel. *Who goeth to Warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a Vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof, or who feedeth a Flock and eateth not of the milk of the Flock? If we have sown unto you Spiritual things, is it a great matter that we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this Power o-*

over you, Are we not rather? Nevertheless we have not used this Power, but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which Minister about Holy things, live of the things of the Temple, and they which wait at the Altar are partakers at the Altar, Even so hath the Lord Ordained that they which Preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. But I have used none of these things. 1. Cor. 9. 11, 12, 13, 14. By which last Speech, and his aforefaying, we have not used this Power, but suffer all things lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ, is shewed forth his own good mind, that he sought the furtherance of the Gospel, and the good of souls more then his own private Ends or Gain. And so where any one will not forbear Preaching, though nothing be ministered to him for the same; and they that are taught in the Word, do not communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things. Gal. 6. 6. Which would be according to the Apostolical Rule, nevertheless he doth not matter or regard, or at least not so much as desist, refrain, or be less diligent in that God's Duty, whither he hath any thing for it or not, this is a certain sign and Evidence, that such a one doth not Teach for hire, nor Divine for Money. Micah. 3. 11. That is, he doth not make it his Principal Ultimate or only End; for this is the thing here Reproved, it being no sin as appears from the afore quoted place out of the *Corinthians*, if it be not necessarily required, but only freely offered, and willingly contributed by the People.

He that doth put a difference, and shew a difference Ezek. 22. 26. Or doth well distinguish, he doth rightly Teach of the nature of the things of God and pertaining to his Kingdom. (If I were but Righteously or equally dealt withal by my Kindred according to the flesh, there would be no need for me to make publick an Intimation of this nature. But their doings towards me have confirmed the Truth of that Old Observation, that if any one in a Family doe serve God more then Ordinary, he shall be sure to be oppressed, Crushed, kept under hatches, and be destitute, afflicted, and tormented by them.

As to offer willingly is highly acceptable and pleasing in the sight of the Lord, so to prevent, Anticipate or be before hand, even before any one doth ask or intimate. This

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an Instance of Offering willingly, and it is God like, for thou
preventest him with the Blessings of Goodness, Psal. 21. 3 E-
ven before a Prayer or Desire is Offered for and in behalf
of them. And it shall come to pass that before they call I will
answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. Isa. 65. 24.
For as one Rightly Observes, It doth resemble the Deity,
and it is God like to do free, ready, and soon acts of Bene-
fence. When we read such places of Scripture as this fol-
lowing, they doe not stand Recorded for nothing, but for
our Admonition and Instruction, upon whom the Ends of
the World are come. The Inhabitants of the Land of Te-
man brought Water to him, that was thirsty, they Prevented
with their Bread him that fled Isa. 21. 14. Mark here a-
gain this Word, prevented; for such as was thirsty, or fled
here did not ask for it, but the others did imagine and ap-
prehend that the others might have need and occasion of it,
and so they were ready before hand to meet and supply
them with it. Like as Melchisedech brought forth Bread
and Wine to Abraham as he was returning from the Slaughter
of the Kings. And so on the other worse hand, Amalek is
cursed and punished, because he met not the Children of
Israel with Bread and Water as they came through, and
from out of the Wilderness. From what is written, Because
that he remembered not to shew Mercy Psal. 109. 16. We
learn, that where we can do any act of Good, Kindness or
Compassion to one another (whither it be to Friend or E-
nemy) and we doe it not, the Lord, when he comes to
enter into judgment, and we are to receive for the deeds
done in the Body, will impute that as sin to that man or
woman who refused, neglected, or omitted it. For though
now it be reckoned as a matter indifferent, and it is com-
monly said they doe him no harm, if they doe him or her no
good; yet in this case, The not doing of Kindnesses
when it is in our Power for to do them, is indeed doing
hurt or injury; because of the real harm, injury or loss
which such a one Sustains for want of having that Kindness
done for him.

As was before mentioned, My heart is towards the Gover-
nours of Israel, that Offered themselves willingly among the
People, so if we may so speak after the manner of Men,
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The Heart of God is towards such of his Servants and Creatures that *Offer themselves willingly* to do such and such Things for his Glory, Worship, and Service, and be doing Good unto Men, or who are for what links these three together, *Glory to God in the Highest, Peace on Earth, and Good will towards Men*; and each one in his Vocation and place doth Offer out himself willingly towards the things that make for the same.

Here again is another Real Act and Instance of *Offering willingly*, when they can and doe bereave their own Soul of Good, to doe good for others: which again will be a doing Good to their own Soul at long run, for *the Merciful Man doeth Good to his own Soul*. Prov. 11. 17. I mean when People are contented to suffer Hunger or pinch their own Belly for once or twice to feed and supply that which hath more often wanted it; when for all out of their obedience to the command of God they will bring that Bread and Water which they do almost want themselves. Like the Widow of Zarephath, who had but an handful of Meal, and a little Oyl in a Cruse. 1. Kings, 17. 12. And yet out of that she was to Sustain and feed *Elijah* the Prophet of the Lord, which she did, and had no lack. Sirs, here is some Trust of God in these things. When thou hast but a little, thou dost Give diligence Gladly to Give freely, and *Offer willingly* of that little; and thou canst not only say so in outward Words, but trust that the Lord will provide a little more against the time, and when that same little is gone, *And they that know thy Name will put their trust in thee: For thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee*. Psal. 9. 10. *O taste and see that the Lord is good: Blessed is the Man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord ye his Saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.* "The Young Lions do lack, "and suffer hunger: But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Psal. 34. 8, 9, 10. And such of his Saints do not fear to be Impoverished or come to want through the Service of God, but they *Offer willingly*, and do things not *Grudgingly*, or of Necessity, even in the Expensive part of Religion, and they indeavour to save, or trust that the Lord (who teacheth to profit) will make it up as much unto them another way.

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So far we have shew'd of this Excellent Duty, of *Offering willingly* as we shew'd the Coherence of the Text, upon the Residue of the Chapter, for the same thing of *Offering willingly* is intended and meant therein all one as what is said in the following Words, "To keep the Commandments, the Testimonies and Statutes of the Lord; for that they should *Offer willingly* towards the Worship and Service of God, is also One of his Commandments, and Testimonies and Statutes. But here it holds true as to both, People are for *Offering willingly*, and for keeping the Commandments, the Testimonies and the Statutes of the Lord sometimes only, and not alwayes. They are for doing it now and then, but not for ever: and therefore in Opposition unto this Corrupt Nature of theirs, whose goodness is as the Morning cloud, and as the early dew, it soon passeth away: As also to help and supply this defect and failure of theirs, David here Prays by the Spirit "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel our Fathers keep this for ever in the Imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of thy People, "and prepare their heart unto thee. There is another Parallel and alike Scripture unto this in Deut 5. 29. "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me; and keep all my Commandments alwayes. Observe this Adverb, alwayes; for it is the same in Signification with that of our Text, "keep this for ever in the Imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy People, that it might be well with them, and with their Children for ever. This is also brought in upon a good Mood and Temper of the People; when they were in an Obedient frame of Spirit unto the Lord God. When they had said unto Moses, "Speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it; and the Lord hereupon answered, They have well said in all that they have spoken. A very good Commendation of our God unto his Creatures; But the cream of the matter is; They have well said, if they will hold unto it, and thereupon God himself Wishes and desires, for it is expressed after the manner of Men, "O that there were such a Heart in them that they would fear me and keep all my Commandments alwayes. By which kind of Speech and Expression, he doth foresee and mistrust, That that Good Resolution of theirs

theirs which was in them, would be Temporary, sudden,
Goe off and pass away again, as truly so it did.

And truly it is so whether we Preach or Pray never so much,
That all good things, the Great Truths of God, all Faith
and all Knowledge; the sense of his Name, and Obedi-
ence to all the Words of his Law, may be kept for ever in
the Imagination of the Thoughts of our Hearts, that in the
day of tryal and hour of temptation, we may have all along
at the very same Time, a Divine Overruling Thought,
which may resist the Temptation, and keep and determine
unto God and Duty; Yet still nevertheless it is sensible
and Experienced, that these things are not kept for ever
in the Imagination of the thoughts of our hearts. I have
often wished and desired for my self (Pray, Let your hearts
also go along with me herein) O that I were alwayes and
for ever such towards God, as I am sometimes in my most
Devout and Solemn Approaches unto him in Prayer, or in
his Ordinance of Hearing his Word; that I had alwayes
the same Reverence, Godly fear, and Horror and Dread
of the Deity, when I am walking about, or sitting still, as
I have sometimes upon my bended knees. That I had the
same constant Gravity, seriousness and trembling of Spirit
in the midst of Life, Health and Prosperity, and when things
go most according to wish, as I have upon the apprehension
of any great danger, or under affliction; or as I shall have
when I come to lye upon the Bed of last sickness and dying.
It is Impossible to recall or vain to wish for, as to what's
past. But O that I might, for all the few and Evil days
remaining of my Pilgrimage, throughout all my success-
ing Life, have that constant Universal Obedience, Honour
and Preferring of God above things, as I shall indeed desire
that I had had when I come to think my last. just as when
I shall perceive that I am yeilding up the Ghost, and surren-
dering up my Spirit to the God that gave it. O that my Spirit
may now henceforth and for ever, so Obey and be given
up unto the Father of the Spirits of all flesh, as she will rec-
lect and wish she had done, when she shall be Summoned
to appear before him, And she is to take her flight into
the Invisible World. O that I did so wait on God all the
day. Psal. 25. 3. And was in the "fear of Lord all the

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"long, Prov. 23. 17. As I have sometimes for two or three Hours together in a Morning. As it is written in Jude, 19. *These be sensuat, having not the Spirit*: So I have too often observed and experienced, that after my too full Meals, I have been damped and for a time lost that sence of God and Spiritual Things, which before I had. O that I might therefore so Eat & Drink to his Glory, that I might be near the same in the midst of or immediately after receiving of my necessary and moderate Food as I was before. And so It should hold in the other circumstances and Conditions of Life, to keep this for ever in the Imagination of the Thoughts of our heart, whither Sleeping or Waking, in Labour or Idle, when we sit in our House, or when we walk and journey in the way, and when we lye down or rise up, in a Word, whatever our hand findeth to doe, or whatever we are Employed about; I say again This still is to be kept for ever in the Imagination of the Thoughts of our hearts, even to keep the Commandments, the Testimonies and the Statutes of the Lord God.

"David here rightly Prays that the Lord would keep this "in the Imagination of the Thoughts of our hearts; for as it is written, *Except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman watcheth but in vain.* Psal. 127. 1. So except the Lord keep our heart, all our keeping of them is in vain, notwithstanding it is commanded, keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the Issues of Life. The Scripture is no where not in the least inconsistent with it self; but the Truth of the Matter seems to stand on this wise: we are first to Pray unto God Immediately to keep our hearts, and having so done, we are to endeavour after the same as much as ever we can our selves. For we learn evidently from what is written, *We then as Workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain.* 2. Cor. 6. 1. *Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling:* "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do "of his Good pleasure, Phil. 2. 12, 13. Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his Working, which worketh in me mightily. Col. 1. 29. That there is a Power and Ability implanted in, and given unto man by God the Creator to Work together with his Grace. It should be a constant

Rule

rule that whatsoever we are commanded or directed to pray for, or whatever we do pray for, we should endeavour after it our selves. *Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily,* Even so we should labour and strive after the same thing. And so to our present case, we should pray unto God in the first place, to keep this still in the Imagination of the thoughts of our hearts and then endeavour, labour, and strive according to whatever we can, to do so our selves.

That it is the Particular Province and Prerogative of Almighty God, to keep the hearts of the children of Men. We have the Scriptures affirming in divers places, for the Lords Vineyard is the hearts of Men, *For the Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the House of Israel.* Isa. 5. 7. And we Read there how he Fenced it, and Gathered out the Stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest Vine, and built a Tower in the midst of it, and also made a Wine-press therein. "In that day Sing ye unto her, A Vineyard of "Red Wine, I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every "Moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it Night and Day. Isa. 27. 2, 3. Here it is affirmed and ratified twice in the same Verse, that God will keep it lest any hurt it; which nothing can do, but Satan or his Temptations, as they seduce to sin or evil. Nothing but sin can hurt the heart of Man. And if we would suffer that the Lord should keep our hearts Night and Day, and that he Guide us continually, so that our selves here are under keepers, and stand upon our watch; for thus the Scripture doth direct in other places, so as to prevent and keep out the comings in and Acts of Sin; and then it is effectually prevented, lest any hurt it. *And all thy Children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy Children,* Isa. 54. 13. The right consequence here is, that when they are taught of God, they should learn of him; and when he doth instruct and would Guide them, they should receive the instruction, and follow his Guidance. God doth Keep, Guide, and Teach the hearts of the Children of Men, in an Invisible manner, but yet it is sensible to the hearts of his faithful People. "The Wind "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, "but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth;

so is every one that is born of the Spirit, *John. 3. 8.* So likewise is every one that is Taught, Guided, or Instructed by the Spirit. And so in like manner God doth keep the hearts of his People. As the Distillings of Dew in a clear Night are not perceived; so God moves himself as it were upon, and communicates himself to the hearts of his Creatures in the still voice of his Word and Spirit. "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a Vision of the Night when deep sleep falleth upon men, In slumberings upon the Bed. Then he openeth the Ears of Men, and sealeth their Instruction." *Job. 33. 14, 15. 16.* And so when we are in the most still, retired, abstracted and separated manner. When we become the Man whom thou choicest and causest to approach unto thee. *Psal. 65. 4.* Then it is that God doth reveal and manifest himself unto us. When we are Obedient and Holy, Sober and Temperate, when we are Chast and do not regard the desire of women, being purified & Sanctified, these are furtherances & forwardings, or helps towards God making known his Mind and Will unto us. As again There are Hindrances and Obstructions. The Principal and I may almost say, the only hinderance is Sin; for it is that which makes that wide Chasm, or Distance between God and the creatures, *Your Iniquities have separated between you and your God. Isa. 59. 2.* Sin or Iniquity in the General do produce this accursed and evil effect.

But they may be clearly Specified, and reduced to these three sorts, Namely, what doth defeat, and render of none, or rather of less effect the Seed sown, or Choke the Word Preached, the same is the Principal hinderance to Gods keeping this still in the Imagination of the Thoughts of the hearts of this People, *The cares of this World and the deceitfulness of Riches, and the lusts of other things entring in Mark. 4. 19.* And so where it is written, *Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your hearts be over-charged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this Life, and so that day come upon you unawares. Luke. 21. 34.* We learn and understand from all this put together, what the hinderances are. And when we know them what they are, we may avoid and let them alone, or at least not be let or hindered by them; They are the Cares of this World, and of this Life, and the deceitfulness of Riches, and the lusts of other things, or Gluttony and

drunkenness and such like. And then the heart being too much set upon Visible Objects, and Visible things, this doth draw off and alienate from, and make to forget and loose the sense of him that is Invisible, as also of the Invisible things of his Kingdom. As was before said, We should Pray unto God to keep this still in the Imagination of the Thoughts of the hearts of thy People ; even that purpose, and Resolution, To keep his Commandments, his Testimonies and his Statutes ; so we should likewise Endeavour, Strive and Labour after the same. And as we Taste and See, Feel and Experience, know and perceive what are the Clogs, Interruptions, and Hinderances, so we should avoid and not give way unto them. The Temper and State of our Soul is Various and several as it stands towards God. *For thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.* Psal. 102. 10. Now and then it is Good enough, and then it is bad, dark and cloudy again, according as we commit Sin, and are plunged into the cares of this Life, or are Interested and concerned in the lusts of other things. The Servants of God are a discerning and observing People. They look within the glass of the Word, and also they reflect and look within their own Souls, and they compare both together. And indeed every one must observe and practice the like methods, who would make any Growth, Proficiency, Increase and Advancement in the Christian Life : Here we might well reason and do, that if we can be and are Godly at one season, why not at another ? and so if our Minds are now fraught with and Furnished, and full of Reverence and fear of the Divine Majesty, so it may be likewise at another time, and thus we might go through the several Stages and Periods of Life even to serve God in Righteousness and true Holiness all the dayes thereof, and to fear continually before him : For by the like means which we do perform it at one time, we may Endeavour after it at another. There is an unseen Enemy, who stands at our Elbow, I mean Satan and his Temptations, who prompts us to commit Sin in each Act or Instance of Tryal, even in our very meals, to eat to excess or commit Gluttony, and so in other things alike ; and here we should be upon our Watch, to Pray and lift up our hearts, Avoid or get behind me Satan, so that he should not get advantage, nor prevail over us. The Use and Benefit here-

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hereof will be exceeding Great ; for besides that this is the only making our Calling and Election sure. It is the only way and means to Assertain Salvation unto our Selves, so the more Good any one doth, and the more he abstains from Sin and from all appearance of evil, It will be proportioned accordingly unto that Man or Woman in the Future Remission, and they will receive a more full and greater Reward. This is the sum and conclusion of the whole matter, and the drift and design of all Preaching, That People may cease to do Evil, and learn to do Well, as much as ever they can. But why is it said in our Text ? *O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac Jacob or Israel.* The Reason hereof seems to be near to this effect and purpose. We read how that *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Israel* were precious Saints and servants of God in their day, and in their Generation, and thereupon God came to be in Covenant with them, and was in a peculiar manner their God. *Now therefore if you will Obey my Voice indeed, and keep my Covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people : For all the Earth is mine.* *Exod. 19, 5.* And so God is the God of all Men and Women, as they are his Creatures, and the Inhabitants of his Earth, but by the way of Peculiarity, Emphasis or Property or Propriety, he is only the God of his Saints and servants, *The Lord knoweth them that are his.* *1. Tim. 2, 19.* But is He the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob only ? No, for he is the God of all their Children also, even of all those who do the Works of Abraham and of all those who are faithfull as Abraham was, who is stiled the Father of the Faithful. But because that from the Loins of these three Men, who did every one of them successively fear and serve the Lord in their time ; *There Sprang even of one* (for One was his Son, the other was his Grand-Son) and him as good as dead, so many as the Stars of the Skie in Multitude, and as the Sand which is by the Sea-shore Innumerable, even a very Numerous Posterity, and great People, who were Elect and Beloved of God before the other Nations of the Earth, for their Fathers sake. Therefore the Scriptures in sundry and many places Stiles him by the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* But whereas it is said in the close of our Text, *And prepare their hearts unto thee.* Hereby another Truth doth shine and appear forth, viz. That God

God hath but one way in bringing many Sons & Daughters unto Glory, or in bringing all the Sons and Daughters of Men that ever go there, unto Heaven. Even by preparing their heart unto himself. That is, by bringing them to himself in this world, that he may bring them to his own home in the World to come. Moreover Brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant how that all our Fathers were under the shadow, and all passed through the Sea: And did all eat the same Spiritual Meat, And did all Drink the same Spiritual Drink: 1 Cor. 10. 1. 3. 4. And so all the People that ever went to Heaven, and are now a going in their journey to it, or who shall be born, and Inherit that Happy Countrey hereafter, they all Go the very same way. If you ask me what that way is. It is the old Trodden way by the Saints, *And a way, and it shall be called the way of Holiness.* Isa. 35. 8. It is the way of Universal Obedience, and confirming all the words of Gods Law to do them (and not Observing some, and Neglecting others as the manner of many is) It is the way drawing near to God, to which the Promise is *James. 4. 8. And he will draw nigh unto you.* Or as it is in the last word of our Text, *by preparing their heart unto him,* Which again is done (as appears by the Context, and the verse immediately following) By keeping this for ever in the Imagination of the Thoughts of our hearts, to have a determinate, Obedient, and Perfect heart and mind to keep constantly, and at all Times the Commandments, the Testimonies, and the Statutes of the Lord. And also such Divine Truths, or Knowledge of the things of God and of his Kingdom, should be for ever kept in the heart, with the Sense and Remembrance of them, which should Actually perswade, exhort, and incline unto the same good thing.

From this manner of Speech, *Prepare their heart unto him,* and from what is else where written, *And he shall go before him in the Spirit and Power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the Fathers to the Children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a People prepared for the Lord.* Luke. 1. 17. We see that there are two things which the Ministry and Preaching of the Word doth drive and intend at. The First is To Convert Sinners, and to turn to Righteousness, and then the next thing is in a further Degree, and Proficiency, even to make them a People prepared for the Lord.

to prepare their hearts unto thee: Which two things have
 been the only Ends and Intent of all the Sermons that ever
 have been Preached in this Place, or design to Preach throughout
 my Succeeding Life. Remembering still, that as the
 Spade or Hook are in the hands of the Gardiner for digging
 the Earth, or Pruning of Trees, even so we Creatures
 and Ministers, are but living Instruments in the Hands of
 God, to dig or cultivate our own hearts, or the hearts of
 other People. For we are Labourers together with God, ye are
 Gods Husbandry, ye are Gods Building. 1. Cor. 3. 9. And
 as before Observed, How David Prayed immediately to
 God, To keep this for ever in the Imagination of the Thoughts
 of the heart of thy People; though we are to Endeavour to
 keep it our selves; so Here again he lifts up the other Peti-
 tion unto God Immediately, prepare their hearts unto thee,
 Though here again we are to Endeavour to prepare our
 own hearts. As also besides this, there is the Word ap-
 pointed; and the Ministry of Preaching thereof (who hear-
 th are become labourers together with God) It is a Bold
 and Great Expression of the Apostle Paul, which he speaks
 forth by the Spirit, *to make them a people prepared for the
 Lord, or to prepare their hearts unto him.* So hath God pro-
 vided and Established; and so should Things Cooperate and
 Work together for the common Salvation of mankind,

But Beloved that are here present, I hope that most of ye
 are among the latter sort; I mean that ye are a-verted
 from Sin, and Converted to God in the General, and ye are
 amongst those, who are preparing for the Lord, or prepar-
 ing their hearts to seek him, or preparing for Heaven. For
 when we Read and Consider, how that Jesus, our forerun-
 ner is gone to prepare a Place for you. John. 14. 3. To this
 must answer, some act of your own, that is to prepare your
 hearts for that place. Whom (that is Jesus) We preach, warn-
 ing every man, and teaching every man in all Wisdom, that
 we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Col. 1. 28.
 It is strange for you to conceive hereof, but yet it is true,
 that God will judge that the Word Preached in this place,
 shall be a warning and Testimony to all the Inhabitants of
 this Town and Neighbour-hood, though not the twentieth,
 nor yet hardly the hundredth part of them do come to hear.
 Remember I told you of it before. I Ground this Affirmati-

on from these Words of Paul who spake thus by the Spirit, and yet it is certain, that every man dwelling in the City of *Colejs*, and the adjacent Villages did not hear *Paul*. Nevertheless seeing that every man thereabout might have heard him Preach if they would, and all had a Rumour and Report thereof, though they would not hear him themselves, therefore according to the method, Interpretation, & account of God according to which he will judge and proceed at the last day; He did *Warn and teach every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*. Whereunto I (and so should all ye that hear me this day) also labour, striving according to his Working, which worketh in me mightily. *Col. 1. 29.* And so ye also are to labour according to the Working of God, which worketh in ye mightily. Do ye not Perceive at my speaking this unto ye, some Groaning of Spirit, and Intercessions and desires after the same which cannot be uttered? That ye may be meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. We know sensibly what is the misery and vexation of worldly disapointments; and there is no disapointment like that of Heaven, which indeed is a Thing possible and to be feared, and the utmost care is to be taken against it all our Life long. "*Israel* hath not obtained that which He seeketh" for, but the Election hath obtained it, and the rest were "blinded. *Rm. 11. 7.* Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. *Heb. 4. 1.* There is no Preaching like unto that of Experimental Preaching; and pray, let your hearts go along with me, and confer Notes, and compare Experiences, By Examining and Communicating with your own Spirits, whilst I declare how it is with mine own Soul. As it is written, *For the Lord hath called thee as a Woman forsaken and grieved in Spirit.* *Isa. 54. 6.* This last Thing of grieved in Spirit, is Exactly mine own condition. I find nothing in me, but I am also shewed the Reason thereof. And this Grief of Spirit in me doth not so much arise from wordly or outward Things, because I know the utmost of them, that they are but little and soon pass away, and seem afterwards just all one as a dream when one awaketh. But as it is elsewhere written, *I Remembered God and was troubled: I complained,*

and

and my Spirit was overwhelmed. *Selah.* Psal. 77. 3. So as I think of God and of the other World (for the Powers of the world to come do shake my Soul) thence does arise all my Trouble , Grief, and Fear. Why so O Man ? It is because I have not that degree of Assurance and well Grounded Hope which I would have, and do Press after still. Pray, Think upon, and Observe this. It is a Secret Anguish and Vexation of Spirit, that I am growing in years, and Gray hairs do here and there appear upon me ; That the Morning of Youth is over and past, and will never return again in this State ; and I haste to that where I seem no more to be, and yet I have not laid in a Better and more assured Foundation against the time to come, which I would still seek to make it yet more and more sure. Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my Soul to thee. Psal. 143, 8. That doubt and Jealousy, and misgiving of heart, Least I neglect, or am afraid to do the Will of God, doth cause no little Vexation of Spirit in me. Cause me to hear thy Loving Kindness early in the Morning, for in thee do I trust &c. Herein I speak of those Extraordinary Works and Tryals, which God is sometimes pleased to call such and such of his Servants out unto. as Abraham to Offer up his Son Isaac and, to Try that Precious Faith of his own Elect, whereby like as Zebulun & Naphtali were People that jeopardd their lives unto the death. Judges. 5, 18. And hazarded their Lives for the Word of his Testimony, for his Truth and Righteousness, as some of his People and Servants have done in former Generations. But Christian People, Take this Counsel as from me, who have been somewhat Experienced in the wayes of God, whensoever ye perceive fears within you, as those same fears do Relate to God, or your own Future State and Condition,) for from hence doth usually arise all the fear, and all the Great Thought and Searching of Heart, whither this shall be indeed Happy or Miserable) There learn to know the true cause of that fear, and then labour to Remove it. Now all fear doth usually arise from Sin and Guilt, and therefore take away the Sin and Guilt, and the fear also will cease. So that the Result of the whole is this, If thou Man or, Woman, wouldst be indeed led in the way Everlasting, thou must be sure that there be no wicked way in thee. *Psal. 134.*

Thou must both Pray, Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and know my Thoughts. And thou must Endeavour the same thy self, even to Search thy self and know thy heart, to try thy self and know thy thoughts, that there be no wicked way in thee, that thou livest in no known Sin, reserved Iniquity whatever, and thou leavest no Duty undone. And that thou dost not Omit, or slip any Opportunities of doing good, *For to him that knoweth to do good, he doeth it not; to him it is Sin,* Jam. 4. 17. Finally Brethren, Whatsoever Things are True, whatsoever Things are Honest, whatsoever Things are Just, whatsoever Things are Pure, whatsoever Things are Lovely, whatsoever Things are of Good Report, if there be any Vertue, and if there be any Praise, Think on these Things. O my Fellow Christians, Think often, Yea think alwayes on the Words of my Text I have Chosen this Day. If you do not Remember, carry away any thing of the Sermon, besides what I have said, be sure to Remember, and carry away the Words of my present Text, for that will be enough and sufficient.

If when any Good Thought or true Thought comes into your Soul, when you like the Patriark Jacob, said unto him, *the Lord shall be my God.* Gen. 28. 21. And when thou sayest thy Vows unto the most High. Psal. 50. 14. When any Truth comes into thy Mind, which either make the invisible God more known unto thee, or the things of the Kingdom or concerning the World to come, even our present State and Condition therein; which same truth or truth do stir up or Quicken, Exhort and Actually Perswade thee to do all the Words of his Law, to keep his Commandments, his Testimonies, and his Statutes, in all these and such like Things, Be sure to lift up thy heart towards God in the Words of my Text, O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel our Fathers keep this for ever in the Imagination of the Thoughts of the Heart of thy People, and prepare their hearts unto thee. I say again for thy more Remembrance and Observance thereof, in all these and such like good cases and Instances, Pray without ceasing, and endeavour the same without ceasing, O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel our Fathers, keep this for ever in the Imagination of the Thoughts of the Hearts of thy People, and prepare their hearts unto thee, Amen, So be it.

F I N I S.